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FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS FOR THE

UNIFICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

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FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS FOR THE UNIFICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

BY

THE MOST REVEREND
THE ARCHBISHOP OF SOFIA
STEPHAN



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FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS FOR THE UNIFICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

For some time the Christian churches have been endeavoring to do away with their differences and to reach unity on questions of faith and order. A world conference of the churches was held in Geneva in 1920 at which a way was sought by which mutual understanding and unification might be attained. A permanent committee was chosen at the end of the conference to continue the work and to prepare a program for a better organized and more effective activity on the part of the churches, with the hope that at the next world's conference the desired unity might be realized on the basis of a common confession of faith.

As a member of this committee, led by its purpose and object and moved by a desire to see the immediate attainment of these ends and objects, which would be a triumph for our holy church universal, we have decided in a brief outline to state our point of view concerning the fundamental conditions for the unification of the churches in order that our position may be clear and precise as we participate in the work of the Christian world for attaining unity of faith and order.

These fundamental conditions, as our readers will understand from our exposition, are of an absolute nature; without them it is impossible and unthinkable to work for unity among the Christian churches, or even to discuss it. They must be studied, adopted and applied by all who want to see the Christian world in the ranks of the Apostolic Church, and then indeed all Christians will be brothers, one flock with one Pastor who, without any differences in conception, will be for all of us our Lord Jesus Christ.



Most men feel a natural longing to be united with those who are similar to them. To this instinctive longing are due most social institutions, such as the family, common groups of several families, the tribe, the nation, the state and all cultural, economic, educational and similar organizations. Human culture can have no higher end than to strengthen more and more this instinct in man by grouping larger social units until at last it can unite all men and nations in one universal society, developing on the basis of the holy principles — liberty and fraternity. The Christian faith has exactly this aim and, therefore, true culture is so organically allied to Christianity, that if it is separated from it, culture misses its way. The church, or a society founded by Jesus Christ, is meant to work for the development of the feeling of unity among men and nations according to the Gospel ideal of one flock with one pastor — the Lord Jesus Christ. From this point of view there cannot even be a question about the unification of the churches, because the very name church is a synonym of unity in Christ.

The fact, however, is to be regretted that the churches are separated from each other like man's political organizations. And they have remained divided without any spiritual communion for many centuries. The first schism took place in 1054 between the Eastern and Western churches. Later, in the sixteenth century the division between the Anglo-Saxon and the Roman churches appeared. Attempts have often been made toward the restoration of unity between the Western and Eastern churches, but without success. Today the movement for uniting the churches has been renewed. The beginning made by the Episcopal Churches of England and of the United States deserves praise, admiration and strong support.

Every Christian heart ought to yearn for the unification of the Christian church, especially every one who has accepted the high calling of a servant of Christ, because he does not serve Christ well who does not work for the fulfillment of the covenant given at the last supper „that all may be one, as Thou, O Father, art in me and I in

Thee". And we pastors of the Orthodox church pray God every day for the more speedy unification of the churches. We would feel a great burden on our consciences if we did not work for the strengthening of this holy movement. But at the same time we realize that for the establishment of permanent unity among a number of organizations it is necessary to have as a basis a common, unshakable foundation accepted by all. To attain real unity it is necessary that all should confess the same confession of faith.

THE TEACHING OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH ABOUT JESUS CHRIST.

We, the members of the orthodox church, proceed from the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that His miraculous birth, life, service, death and resurrection have been prophesied many times in different ages with remarkable precision and detail by the Old Testament prophets Isaiah, Micah, Malachi, Daniel, David, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.; that He is the One who was expected by the heathen to save suffering humanity from evil; a fact abundantly proved by the Egyptian traditions concerning Osiris and the Greek tragedy of Prometheus by Aeschylus; by the Persian expectation of Mitra; by the Hindu belief in Krishna; by the Roman prophecies concerning the Sibyls and by the Greek philosophy of Socrates and Plato.

Since we believe that Christ, as a real God and a real man, was the One, who alone by His death on the cross could redeem and has redeemed humanity, which had fallen through sin and had been deprived of the grace of God, that He was a new Adam and as such has given new life to mankind, we must go to His teachings in order to understand His service on earth, the problems which He put before His disciples, and the means which He appointed for their solution.

In the person of the first Adam mankind became disobedient toward God and injured his very being since as a consequence of sin, he was deprived of the possibility of being at peace with God and as a result lost his earthly prosperity and made his flesh subject to decay and death. In order that he might rise from his fall and

again receive the grace of God, there was necessary a sacrifice equal to the measure of the sin so as to satisfy the judgment of God. Such a sacrifice it was impossible for man to offer. That was possible for the Son of God alone, who for this purpose took upon Himself flesh without sin, offered Himself as an innocent sacrifice by means of a shameful death on the cross for the forgiveness of the sins of men and conquered death by His resurrection. And man can find salvation only in Him as he follows the way pointed out by Him. As the prophets through whom God spoke brought good tidings to suffering men with their teaching so Jesus Christ „went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God“ (Luke 8:1), and before Pilate he said, „To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice“ (John 18:37). The prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ Himself was the Truth, and the „true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world“ (John 1:9). He revealed Himself as the Son of God, sent by His Father; He also declared that He Himself would send the Spirit of God; He pictured God not only as the embodiment of unspeakable love, but He also showed that God, in spite of the sins of men, loved them so much that He supplied them with all good things (Matt. 7:11) and besides sent „His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life“ (John 3:16). Through Christ we are no longer slaves, but sons and heirs of God (Gal. 4:7). Christ has given us a new teaching and a new commandment of love (John 13:34) so strong and all embracing that like the love of God the Father, it must extend to those who hate us (Matt. 5:44-47), and He Himself became an example of moral perfection (John 13:34). Christ has shown to men that the highest moral ideal is in God and has given us a teaching in regard to immortal life for those who follow Him, and for those who remain in sin (Matt. 25:46).

But the mere teaching of the Son of God was not sufficient: it was necessary to give to men the possibility of feeling that they are the children of God and of

turning to Him with filial boldness. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to remove the barrier between their guilt and the righteousness of God. Christ did away with this guilt by the service of atonement which he rendered in His capacity of High Priest. In His human capacity He suffered and lived — ■ just man for the sake of the unjust. (I Peter 3:18; II Cor 5:15). And if men would become truly the children of God filled with His grace, they must receive ■ new heart and ■ new spirit (Ezek. 36:26), as well as means for growing in the life of grace. Christ also has given these means in His royal ministry. Therefore, the Archangel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation „He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end“ (Luke 1 : 32, 33). Christ Himself when preaching said, „Repent ye: for the kingdom of God is at hand“ (Matt. 3:2), and before Pilate He declared that He was King, but that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36), but of heaven, for which the earth and all that is earthly are only ■ preparatory stage (Matt. 6:19—21; 6:33).

The kingly power of Christ was directed towards one aim: to educate men in a spiritual life full of grace in order that they might become worthy members of the kingdom of God revealed to them. In order to achieve this aim he rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, performed many miracles, gave to men ■ new moral law, created the Church and supplied His disciples with means of grace for the attainment of this purpose (Matt. 16:18). The Church, founded on the granite faith in His human-divine nature—in the words of St. Paul — „must serve for the perfection of the saints . . . till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto ■ perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ“ (Eph. 4:11—13) Having all power in Heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18), He helped people on their way to the kingdom of God (Hebr. 2:18), and sent the Holy Spirit to His disciples (Acts 2:14) in order that it might abide with them and their followers forever (John 14:16). He guided them unto all truth (John

16:13); and gave them different gifts (I Cor. 2:7), remaining always the unseen Head of the Church (Eph. 5:11 and 23), as St. Paul has said, „For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet“ (I Cor. 15:25).

SALVATION.

The aim of the public ministry of Christ, therefore was to lead people into the kingdom of Heaven, i. e., as He Himself says, God „will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth“ (I Tim. 2:4). Salvation is not limited merely to the atonement for human guilt in general by the death of Christ on the cross, but also consists in the application of the means of redemption in the life of every man separately. The second step in the act of salvation was taken by Christ Himself in sending the Holy Spirit and in creating the church on earth, to which He has given all means necessary for the sanctification of men, that is — for the inward spiritual regeneration of man to a new life in Christ, to an ever growing and flourishing life in Him. St. Gregory of Nazianzus calls this regeneration a holy wash, a healing from the infirmities of sin; St. Vassilius, the Great — a restoration of the picture of God in the darkened soul of man; and Makarius, the Great — an illumination of the soul, through the power of which it is delivered from darkness, as though the whole of it had become light itself, and an eye which sees.

The main factor in the regeneration of man is the Grace of the Holy Spirit, which suffuses the faithful not only by the power of the merits of Christ, but because of the faith of man. Christ Himself has said, „He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned“. (Mark 16:16). And St. Paul explains that we are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8), also in his epistle to the Romans, „The just shall live by faith“ (Romans 1:17). And the essential need of the Grace of God is emphasized by Christ in His talk with Nicodemus when He says that man must be born from above (John 1:13), in order to enter the kingdom of God and that for salvation men are powerless without Him and cannot do anything of themselves (John 15:5). In another place

He says, „That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit“. After His ascension Christ revealed to His disciples the source of life-giving grace by sending them the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, in order to abide in the Church until the end of the world.

This regenerating power acts in man and perfects him. The Apostle John calls regeneration the seed of God, which abides in the faithful and develops with the help of the spiritual nature of man himself. Thus, some, according to the Acts of the Apostles, received the Grace of God with obedience and compassion (2:37, 38), others with resistance (7:51). Some, according to the words of St. Paul, fan it into a flame (I Tim, 4:14), while others put it out (I Thess. 5:19).

The question arises: How is this grace communicated: only inwardly, independent of outward means or is it dependent on them, and is the inward work of man himself sufficient, or are outward means and guidance essential for the springing up of faith?

To the first question St. John Chrysostom has answered that if man were without flesh, God would offer him His gifts directly, but since the soul is joined to the body, the gifts of God are offered to the faithful through outward signs and acts. To the second question St. Paul gives the following answer in his epistle to the Romans, „How then shall they call on him whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?“ (Rom. 10:14).

Christ Himself sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles in order that they, being filled with the Holy Spirit, might serve as organs and mediators through whom other believers might receive His holy gifts. For this exalted purpose after His resurrection He ordered them to go among all nations to baptize them and to teach all men what He had taught them. (Matt. 28:19). This means that of all His followers the Savior gave to the apostles only the right to officiate at those celebrations through which the Grace of the Holy Spirit is communicated to the faithful. The fact that Christ made His apostles builders, teachers, and leaders of the faithful, that He promised to send them the Holy Spirit to abide with them always (John 14:16),

and that He assured them that He Himself would be with them to the end of the world (Matt. 28:20), shows clearly that Jesus Christ attributed great importance to visible, outward teaching and guidance, and that He Himself determined upon an unchangeable order, according to which the consecration of men is to take place. And this order was able to be realized on earth and preserved forever only through a continuous and successive passing on of the power and means for the consecration of the apostles to their successors. The church which Christ founded was foreordained to begin with the apostles, to exist to the end of the world and to preserve within itself, without interruption, the divine organs or mediators essential for the consecration of men, as well as the consecrating means themselves. He invested the apostles with the divine power of teachers when He said to them, „As my Father hath sent me, so even send I you“ (John 20:21). Again He said to them, „He that heareth you heareth me; and He that despiseth you despiseth me; and He that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me“ (Luke 10:16). „All power is given to me in heaven and in earth, go ye, therefore, and teach all nations“ (Matt. 28:18—19). He invested them with priestly power when He ordained that not even one of the faithful should perish (Matt. 18:10—17), and gave them power to bind and to loose (Matt 18:18).

From all the quotations which we have cited it is clear that it was Christ who established the Church and that He gave it an organization in which the power is based on the authority of those who are higher in spiritual gifts, and this power must be handed on by those in power to their successors. To this group of people is given a definite activity, which has for its purpose, the consecration of people, as Metropolitan Makarius of Moscow says, „The church is a community of the faithful baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, founded directly by Him, and through the holy apostles, quickened and guided towards eternal life by Him — outwardly through spiritual pastors, through teaching, through the celebration of the sacraments, through organization, and in the meantime inwardly through the almighty Grace of the all-consecrating Holy Spirit“.

DE IURE DIVINO ET DE IURE HUMANO.

The immediate successors of Christ, the apostles, were living witnesses of His work and continued that work on earth. Inspired by the Holy Spirit and faithful to the teaching of the Savior, they gave to the Church an organization which is to be accepted as an obligatory authority for the times after them and which contains in itself the nucleus of the whole further development of ecclesiastical organization, in which can be distinguished clearly that which is in the Church „jus divinus“ and is, therefore, inviolable and not subject to change by the hands of man and that which has grown and developed „de jure, humano“, although on a divine basis. To the first, i. e. to the divine organization belong triple hierarchy and the seven sacraments. The Church cannot change anything in this category, because the Church is a faithful guardian of the apostolic tradition. To the apostolic tradition belongs also the teaching concerning the organs and the forms of church legislation and government which was given and sealed forever according to the directions of the Savior Himself with the assistance of the holy apostles

THE HIERARCHY.

That the hierarchy is not a product of human thought, that it is not something determined by men, that it is not created by the development of the church but that the source of its authority lies in the will of its Founder, can be seen from its function, namely, to be an organ through which the faithful can receive the means of grace and to be the guardian of these means. Christ told the apostles, „Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven“ (Matt. 18:18); and also „He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me“ (Luke 10:16). And although all the faithful by the power of their redemption and their union with Christ, the Chief Priest, are priests, still in order to realize the priesthood in the church separate persons have

been set apart to be mediators between God and the faithful. Their ministry receives its power from the ministry of Christ in His capacity of High Priest, and aids in the building up and growth of the Body of Christ, the church, as St. Paul says in the Epistle to the Ephesians, „And He gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto ■ perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ“ (Ephesians 4:11—13). From the very beginning this hierarchy was connected with certain persons and was continued by the passing on of ecclesiastical authority through the laying on of hands. St Paul writes in the first Epistle to Timothy, „Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery“ (I Tim. 4:14). In another epistle to the same he writes, „Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands“ (II Tim 1:6). And again he writes to him, „Lay hands suddenly on no man“ (I Tim. 5:22). Any ministry which is not connected in ■ visible manner with the original bearers of authority cannot have any power. The whole fullness of the ministry was passed on by God to the apostles whom He sent to preach the gospel after He had given them power to forgive or to retain sins, and he commanded them to officiate at the Eucharist, to teach and baptize all nations. To them He sent the Holy Spirit as is seen from the Gospel, „As the Father has sent me so I send you“ „and when He had said this He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins you retain, they are retained“. So also He has given them power to perform the sacraments and to exercise the power of ■ pastor. The apostles passed on their power to their successors, and in this way created the hierarchy (John 20:21—23).

The bearers of this hierarchical power are the bishops but along with them in the Acts of the Apostles we meet presbyters and deacons also. These three grades

were distinguished from one another even as far back as the times of the apostles. The duty of the presbyters was restricted to the pastorhood. („Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind“) (I Peter 5:1—2), and to the performing of the sacraments, („Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let him pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord“) (James 5:14). But the government of the Church, the power to appoint bishops, presbyters, deacons was given only to those persons who possessed special authority, as can be seen from St. Paul's address to Timothy and Titus. Regarding the initiation into the rank of a bishop we have a testimony left by St. Paul in the I Epistle to Timothy when the latter is appointed independent hierarch in the church at Ephesus and St. Paul instructs him how to conduct himself in God's house (I Tim. 3:15), and gives him power to ordain others (I Tim. 5:22). In the same epistle the apostle gives instructions concerning the remuneration of priests and the manner in which they shall be judged when accused (I Tim. 5:17, 19). The ordination itself was performed by the council of the priestly elders under the presidency of St. Paul. The ordination of presbyters is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (14:23). There is also mentioned the appointment of seven men which was the origin of the office of elder (6:1-6). Although at the beginning of the apostolic era the two names „presbyter“ and „bishop“ were somewhat mixed, even during the times of the apostles, according to data left by the writers from the first century, two separate grades were distinguished in these names, and the bishops alone had the authority to pass on the holy gifts requisite for performing the sacraments. In the course of the following centuries, in every hierarchical grade there appeared differences in honor and power in the church government, (the bishops began to be divided into patriarchs, exarchs, metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, and among the presbyters and deacons appeared proto-presbyters and proto-deacons) but these distinctions had as their basis not divine but canonical regulations and were, therefore, liable to change.

THE SACRAMENTS.

That which has been established by the Divine Founder and His apostles is not subject to change. This can be said of all the seven sacraments. They are all designed to communicate in a visible manner definite gifts of grace. They are means for the consecration of man and through them special persons, by virtue of the fact that they have been ordained to transmit these gifts, have been called to regenerate men to a new life full of grace, as St. Paul writes to Titus, „For the grace of God that bringeth salvation had appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee“ (Titus 2:11—15). Among all the means employed for the consecrating of men such as the preaching of the Gospel, the pastorhood, the ministry — the central place is occupied by the sacraments through which, as has been said by St. Paul, the grace of the Holy Spirit acts, „Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God“ (I Cor. 4:1).

ORDINATION.

First comes the sacrament of ordination which gives us persons invested with the right to perform other sacraments. To what has been said above in connection with the hierarchy we will add what St. Paul himself says in his speech to the presbyters of the church at Ephesus, „Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood“ (Acts 20:28). In the second Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul writes, „Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by putting on of my hands“ (II Tim. 1:6). This

mysterious service of grace together with the other similar means for transmitting the grace of the Holy Spirit, later on received the name of „sacrament“.

BAPTISM.

The sacrament „baptism“, which has its practical origin in the baptism of Jesus Christ Himself, was established after the resurrection of Christ, who having received from His heavenly Father all power in heaven and on earth, said to His disciples, „Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world“ (Mat. 28 : 20) and added, „Whoever has faith and is baptized will be saved“. Christ Himself has shown in His conference with Nicodemus that this sacrament is absolutely necessary in order to be born into the life of grace, saying, „Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God“ (John 3 : 3), and afterwards He explained more fully, „Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit“ (John 3 : 5). St. Paul speaks of the abounding power of the sacrament baptism, „Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word“ (through baptism and the pronouncing of words) (Ephesians 5 : 25—26). In another place he compares the baptism to the death and resurrection of Christ, „Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord“ (Rom. 6 : 4, 11). Through this sacrament not only are the sins of man forgiven, and his faith quickened, but he is also fully renewed and regenerated to a new life, as can be seen from the above mentioned words of St. Paul and of Christ Himself.

CONFIRMATION.

(Anointing with oil).

At the very beginning also there was another sacrament which was connected with baptism, and the purpose of which was to augment the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the newly baptized person; it was performed by the laying on of hands, and afterwards — by anointing with oil. And the apostles after the Holy Spirit had been sent to them, began to perform this sacrament upon faithful followers after their baptism. Thus, after the baptism of the Samaritans, the apostles sent Peter and John to impart to them the Holy Spirit and they „when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; (For as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost“ (Acts 8:15—17). St. Paul did the same thing at Ephesus as is recounted in the Acts of the Apostles (19:1—6). It is possible that even at the time of the apostles the grace of this sacrament was transmitted by anointing with oil, for John speaks of it in his epistle when he addresses himself to the newly baptized, „But the anointing which you have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it had taught you, ye shall abide in him“ (I John 2:27). And in the epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul writes, „Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts“, (II Cor. 1:21—22). The apostles Paul and John testify of the anointing as a visible means for the receiving of the Holy Ghost by the faithful.

THE EUCHARIST.

There is, finally, a sacrament in which not only is the grace of the Holy Spirit transmitted to the participant but God appears to the believers in His bodily presence when they taste of His flesh and blood. This sacrament

is the Eucharist, in which by tasting of Christ's flesh and blood the faithful are inwardly united with Him and receive the fullness of the divine life, as an earnest of that life in which is revealed to us in its perfection the future kingdom of Christ. In uniting ourselves to the body of Christ which was sacrificed for the life of the whole world, and to His blood which was shed for many for the remission of sins, we unite ourselves with His sufferings and accept His redemptive act. Even before the establishment of the Eucharist Christ taught that He had come from heaven as the bread of life. „I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world“ (John 6:51). He taught the Jews also more details concerning the eating of His flesh, saying, „Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so He that eateth me, even he shall live by me“ (John 6:53—57). The sacrament itself, according to the evangelists Matthew and Mark, was established at the Last Supper, when Christ having taken the bread, blessed it and gave it to His disciples with the words, „Take, eat; this is my body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying Drink ye all of it“. „And He said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many“ (Matt. 26:26, 27; Mark 14:22—24). In this way He gave bread and wine to His disciples after having thanked God and blessed them, i. e., after having performed upon them an act of prayer, as a result of which the bread and wine became that which He Himself called them — His body and His blood. In celebrating the Eucharist Himself He asked them to do that in remembrance of Him (Luke 22:19) „till He came“ (I Cor. 11:26), i. e., He commanded the apostles and their successors to perform the Eucharist on behalf of all the believers. The sacrifice of the Eucharist appears to us as a reproduction of the

sacrifice which took place at Golgotha. The teaching of the Eucharist is set forth in the Orthodox Apostolic Creed as follows: „We believe that in this celebration our Lord Jesus Christ is present, not symbolically, not in appearance, not by superabundance of grace as in the other sacraments, not merely by the entrance of the Holy Spirit, and not by the penetrating of the Body so that the divinity of the Word enters truly in the bread offered at the Eucharist, but truly and in reality, so that after the consecration of the bread and wine the bread is altered, changes its nature, is transformed into the real Body of the Lord and the wine is transformed into the real blood of the Lord We believe also that this is a real sacrifice for propitiation, which is offered for all godly people whether living or dead, as is said in the prayers of the sacrament itself, which have been delivered to the church by the apostles by the order of God for the salvation of all“.

MARRIAGE.

Marriage was given a deeply religious significance even during the period of the patriarchal society which prevailed in Old Testament times. For the performing of the marriage ceremony the blessing of God was considered necessary as well as the blessing of the parents, which at that time was equal to a priestly blessing. Christ, who came into the world to fulfill the law, and not to destroy it, enhanced still more the religious meaning of marriage by teaching that it was instituted by God and that by its very nature it is insoluble, although He recommended chastity for those who could preserve chastity of the body and of the soul. He said to the Pharisees, „Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said. For this causes hall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder“ (Matt. 19:4—6). In attributing such a character to marriage and in ordaining its indissolubility Christ assigns the things concerning marriage not to the domain

of Caesar, but to the dominion and law of the church founded by Him on earth and furnished with His own authority. Besides this He honored with His presence and with His blessing the marriage feast at Galilee and thus showed that it is necessary to transmit the blessing of God to the newly married. It is clear from the epistles of St. Paul that everything concerning marriage must be referred to the church founded by Christ. When St. Paul rebuked the false teachers for forbidding marriage, the reason was that they were preventing that which was sanctified by the word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:3—5). And in his epistles to the Ephesians St. Paul developed in more detail his teaching on this question, namely that this union represents spiritually the blessed union between Christ and the church. „This ■ great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church“ (Ephesians 5:32). If the meaning of the union formed at marriage is so high, this is due to the fact that this union partakes of the grace of God, on account of which there must exist ■ special service in the church. According to the information handed down by the church fathers during the early years of the Christian church, every Christian marriage had to be approved by the bishop and to receive his blessing with prayer, which gave to the marriage a religious character and a moral significance. Our church, in holding to the clear teaching of St. Paul cannot deny that the Christian marriage has sacramental, religious significance and, therefore, cannot refuse to make its solemnization equal to that of a ceremonial rite.

REPENTANCE.

For the same reason the church cannot dispense with another of its means of grace, namely the sacrament of repentance, which serves as the chief instrument for the recovery of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which although obtained through the sacrament of baptism, disappears whenever the believer falls into sin. This sacrament was established by Jesus Christ after His resurrection. When He appeared to His disciples, He breathed on them and said. „Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever

sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:22—23). By this act He invested them with the power which during His earthly life He had promised to Peter in the words, "And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19); afterwards He said the same thing to the rest of the apostles, in the following words "Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:18). Thus Jesus Christ gave power to the apostles to forgive sins, and authorized them to pass this power on to their successors. In the parable of the lost sheep Christ pointed out how valuable repentance is. He said, "Likewise, joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). Again He ordered His disciples to go among all nations and preach forgiveness of sins and repentance. "And in His name repentance and forgiveness of sins were preached among all nations beginning at Jerusalem". It was to this repentance that St. Paul called the Jews when they were seeking forgiveness for their sins. He said, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted" (Acts. 3:19). St. Paul also required repentance "With godly sorrow" (II Cor. 7:10) and required from those who repent deeds worthy of repentance (Acts. 26:20). He speaks of the lamenting spirit of repentance which was sent into the world by God to pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow (Hebrews 4:12). As a condition of forgiveness the Savior required of the sinner sincere repentance and a contrite recognition of guilt together with faith in the mercy of God and a decision not to sin in the future, as is proved by the cases of the prodigal son, the publican and the sinning woman concerning whom the Savior Himself said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven for she loved much" (Luke 7:47). The Savior Himself pointed out the limits of forgiveness in the words, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And

whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall, not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. 12:31—32). St. Peter acted in the same way when he condemned Ananias for a lie against the Holy Spirit. St. Paul at the beginning excommunicated the man guilty of incest, but afterwards when he was overwhelmed with great sorrow and repentance he forgave him in the name of Christ (II Cor. 2:7).

The sole way to determine the degree of guilt in every case of sinning can only be verbal confession. Such repentance for sin was offered to John the Baptist by many believers of whom it is said that they confessed their sins and received instructions from him (Matt. 3:6). During the years of early Christianity which constituted a period of deep religious regeneration, the natural means of repentance was verbal confession, when „out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). This was the only means through which the believer could receive healing for his mental infirmities, „And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their gifts"—are words spoken in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 19:18). It was altogether natural for the apostles merely to confirm this way of expressing repentance. The apostle speaks, „If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness", (I John 1:8—9).

Concerning the question as to who should act as a mediator between the sinner and God, only those can act to whom power has been given" to bind and to loose sins" (Matt. 18:18) and their successors to whom has been entrusted the stewardship of God's mysteries, „Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God (I Cor. 4:1).

If we cast a glance at the sacrament of repentance as it was practised in the ancient church, we see that the same practise has been preserved in the Orthodox (Eastern) Church. She can neither relinquish the mediation of priests established by the practice of the apostles and required by the teaching of the Savior Himself, nor can

she accept the teaching of predestination, because, according to that teaching, the grace of God is left to save only such as are predestined for salvation independent of their own participation and confession and that in spite of the clear teaching of the Savior Himself who requires for the salvation of man not only the grace sent from above but also the living faith of the sinner himself who is receiving the act of grace, „If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water“ (John 7:37—38). And at another time when He sent His disciples to preach He told them, „Go into the world and teach the gospel to all creatures. He that does not believe will be judged“ (Mark. 16:15, 16). In the same way St. Paul has taught that faith is necessary at all times for the continuation of the work of consecration of man because we are saved by it; by faith we receive forgiveness of sins, (Rom. 5:1), have access to grace (Rom. 5:2) and become worthy of grace (Gal. 3:2, 5). This same faith he considered the special possession of the believers (I Thess. 3:7, 10) and advised them not to grow weak in faith (Rom. 14:1), but to strengthen it and to multiply it (II Thess. 1:3; II Cor. 10:15).

ANOINTMENT.

The sacrament of anointment is designed to heal in a direct manner the infirmities of the body of man as repentance heals the infirmities of his soul. It was established by the Savior Himself, who in sending His disciples to preach ordered them to heal all sickness and infirmity (Matt. 10:1, 8) by anointing the sick with oil. And truly, the apostles during the time of their ministry“ anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them“ (Matt. 6:13). From the epistle of St. James we see that even from the time of the apostles the church had the right to anoint with oil. The apostle James writes, „Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he hath

committed sins they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:13—14). This commandment the apostle gives not on his own authority but in the name of Christ which he refers to at the beginning of his epistle (James 1:1). Thus this ministration was inaugurated by Christ Himself and was performed by the presbyters as well as by the bishops (presbyters in this case meaning bishops). The anointing with oil is accompanied by prayers and forgiveness of sins, i. e., together with the healing of the body; the soul also is healed as is pointed out in the epistle of James. Since it possesses these characteristics this ministration must rightly be given a place beside the other services through which the believers receive invisibly the grace of the Holy Spirit by means of outward signs, namely the sacraments.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SACRAMENTS AS MEANS OF SALVATION.

Generally speaking the Church sees in the sacraments the principal means for the consecration of man. Without them it is impossible for a man who has sinned to lead a Christian life, because he cannot by his own efforts recover from his fall; to be lifted up he must come into contact with Him who has redeemed him by His death on the cross and has showed him the way of salvation through the church established by Christ who promised that „the gates of hell will not prevail against it“. The truly Christian life is a life full of grace. Without the help of grace a life cannot be Christian, no matter what form it may take. The achievements of man do not give fruit of themselves, but by grace. „I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase“ (I. Cor. 3:6). Grace lightens up the whole being of man, because God „will come unto him, and make our abode with him“ (John 14:23) and fills him with joy, „and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you“ (John 16:22).

The ultimate aim of man — communion with God, the dignifying of man by the indwelling of God in him — cannot be achieved except in the way pointed out by the Savior, cannot be attained outside His church governed

by the successors of the apostles, according to the words of the Savior Himself: „He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me“ (Luke 10:16). „For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ“ (I Cor. 3:11). He is the Head of the church, and governs it invisibly by His grace, and visibly through His instruments, that is, the church hierarchy established by Him for the purpose of performing the holy ministrations — the sacraments.

CHURCH LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT.

In the act of salvation the bishops, as successors of the apostles, are called to play the leading part, being superior to the presbyters in virtue of the fact that only they have the right to perform the sacrament of ordination, and likewise in the legislation and government of the church they have a predominant significance. They alone have received certain authority in the government of the church, and they alone have received the right to reward and to judge the presbyters as can be seen from the instructions which St. Paul gave to Timothy; who was endowed with all the rights which had been given to the apostles, „Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. Against an elder receive not accusation but before two or three witnesses“ (I Tim. 5:17, 19). Christ Himself points to the church as the supreme spiritual and moral court. He has also laid down regulations according to which one should conduct himself towards a sinner, namely, at the beginning a sinner must be reprov'd in private; afterwards before two or three witnesses, and then if he does not obey he is to be handed over to the church; if he does not obey it „let him be unto thee as a heathen man and publican“ (Matt. 18:15, 16, 17). With these regulations the Savior has given the church the right to inflict final spiritual punishment — to excommunicate from its midst the guilty ones; and in the church the predominant part is played by those to whom He has given the right to bind and to loose and to guide

the spiritual act by which man attains perfection „unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ“ (Ephesians 4:13). In their pastoral practice the apostles have given an example to their successors, to which they must turn whenever any matter arises which concerns the whole church. For example, when a dispute broke out at Antioch concerning the circumcision of the heathen and the application of the law thereof, the apostles gathered at a council in Jerusalem and decided not to compel the heathen to keep this law and ordained that this decision was to be compulsory for the whole church (Acts 15:16-23). „And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem“ (Acts 16:4). There were other people present at this council besides the apostles and persons who had the grace of the priesthood, and they took part in the discussions of the council, yet they did not participate in the making of the decisions. The decrees issued in the name of the whole church were made by the apostles alone (Acts 15:7, 13, 22, 23). A little later also, the apostles presupposing that the centre of spiritual power in every church is its bishop from whom issue the teaching, the ministrations, and the church governments, decreed that certain individual churches are subject to the control of all their bishops of the local council. The 37th rule of the apostolic regulations reads, „There shall be a council of bishops twice a year to discuss the dogmas of godliness and to settle the church disputes which may have arisen“. In the course of the first three centuries, until the calling of councils made up of delegates from all the churches of the world, i. e., up to the time of the ecumenical councils, there were many local councils which consisted of bishops and of elders invested with the authority of bishops. This shows that it was impossible for a separate church to exist without the hierarchy, with a bishop at its head. At these councils the church was always recognized not as an ordinary human society but as an association founded by God under the government of a hierarchy blessed by God; as a society not worldly but spiritual and endowed with divine grace, a society striving towards the divine regeneration of souls and the moral prosperity of the people. And the whole

church of Christ, which comprises all separate churches, is subject to all the bishops while the center of the spiritual power of the church is the ecumenical councils, as that center once rested with the apostles who laid down rules for the whole church ecumenically as can be seen from their decree ending with the words, „For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us“ (Acts 15: 28).

After the cessation of the persecutions against the church, ecumenical councils were called with the cooperation of the authority of the state and there all matters concerning the church were decided. These councils were the supreme authority in matters of faith, and all separate churches, pastors and believers were required to obey them. At these councils representatives of the separate churches were always bishops or their deputies. This superior court, in uniting all the bishops who are subject to it in respect to ecclesiastical teaching, ministry and government preserves the unity of the universal church of Christ, with Christ for its only Head and it also preserves the religious doctrine expressed in the inviolable Apostles' Creed. This unity is not violated by the fact that the separate local churches have their own forms of government which correspond to their needs, and their own organizations which may differ in some respects from those of the other local churches, because they all have the same common basis, determined not only by canonical right, but also by God. In this respect the decrees of the ecumenical councils are divided into two kinds: some refer to religious and moral doctrines and are decreed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the others come as a result of temporal historical conditions and are liable to change together with them. The unusual wealth and breadth of the Christian spirit presents an unlimited horizon for the national genius of every nation in the manner of revering and glorifying the Most High, without infringing upon the unity of the religious and moral doctrines and with full unity of faith and spirit in the bonds of peace (Ephesians 4: 3) with the remaining national churches of the same faith.

CONDITIONS FOR THE SPIRITUAL UNITY OF CHRISTIANS.

Determined to remain ever faithful to Christ, the Savior, and to the covenants and traditions of His apostles, the Orthodox church will never give up its religious doctrine expressed in the Nicene Creed, worked out by it in the battle against the heresies; nor will it give up its understanding of the question of the hierarchy and the holy sacraments. In spite of all this the Orthodox church, remembering the covenant of its Founder Christ which is a covenant of brotherly love, is prepared to extend its helping hand to all humanity, suffering and seeking the truth and striving toward salvation; it will point out to mankind the roads of salvation; will open before men the depths of the divine revelation where this is possible in the church, at private meetings, and at world conferences. The acceptance of these truths given by God constitute an essential condition for the spiritual unity of Christians.

AS TO JOINING THE NON-ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN A CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE DECHRISTIANIZATION OF CIVILIZATION.

But if it is impossible to reach complete spiritual unity among the churches because some churches may not accept the gospel of salvation as presented by us, which the Orthodox church accepts as the teaching of the incarnate God Himself, and which will be kept eternally inviolate, it is still possible to organize on the basis of general Christian moral principles in cooperation with the other non-Orthodox churches for the attainment of the same high aims. There is a wide horizon open here for the determining of the ways and forms for a mutual realization of such an undertaking. In this respect the churches can unite in the same way as the states.

As is well known, there exist different alliances among different countries for the purpose of common action and for the realization of common purposes. In ancient and medieval history the ones best known were the military alliances, which were concluded temporarily for mutual

military help against a common enemy. In modern times, however, there appears a closer alliance among the countries, the so-called confederation or federation. Several states form an organic whole, in which the individual states do not disappear, but supplement each other, and while keeping their own form of government together maintain an organization having common governing organs, which pursue the general aims of the confederated or federated states. Besides this, in the course of nineteen centuries the states have created many other forms of unity for the realization of special purposes held in common. There are different international leagues of an administrative character such as: the international Red Cross, the postal, telegraph and railway conventions, the league for the protection of literary rights, the league for the protection of labor, etc. If the states have been able to come so close, that they have already created international law and international courts for common sanitary measures, then we see nothing which should hinder the cooperation of the existing churches for the realization of common aims such as; determining means for a campaign against the dechristianization of contemporary humanity, mutual measures of defense against the persecution of the church of Christ by the state, the destruction of all negative teachings and movements which pull down everything positive created by centuries of culture, in which the most valuable contributions have been made by those institutions, on which in some form or other has been stamped the spirit of the Savior of the world — the churches. This mutual activity will serve as a strengthening of the Christian spirit in humanity and as a moral uplifting of the individual in society, as well as for a greater mutual understanding and rapprochement among the Christian churches for the common continuation and growth of the work of Christian justice and love.

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